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HENRY CUELLAR, PH.D.
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 18, 2021

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

The Honorable David Gray
Acting Regional Administrator- Region 6
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1201 Elm Street, Suite 500
Dallas, Texas 75270

Dear Administrator Regan and Acting Regional Administrator Gray:

I write to express concern regarding ethylene oxide emissions from a commercial sterilizer plant in Laredo, Texas, part of my Congressional District. Midwest Sterilization Corp. ranks as one of the top emitters of ethylene oxide in the country, releasing approximately 16,000 pounds of the chemical annually.

As you know, ethylene oxide (EtO) is a chemical used to manufacture a variety of products. It is also used to sterilize medical equipment. However, it is recognized as a carcinogen that increases the risk of cancer after exposure. Local officials and constituents have expressed strong concerns about ethylene oxide exposure from Midwest to community residents and local schools. I believe that it is critical for the EPA to help address these concerns and respectfully request that the following actions be taken immediately:

1. Hold a community meeting in Laredo as soon as possible to answer questions on your data collection status, and how the EPA will ensure the safety of Laredo residents from this chemical, and assist our South Texas community with the permanent phasing out of these emissions in Laredo;
2. Provide and install air quality monitors around the facility, schools, and neighborhoods, as well as appropriate sites in order to evaluate other potential background levels using the TO-15 air sampling protocol;
3. Include the Laredo facility in the list of 31 commercial sterilizer plants that the EPA has recently asked to submit Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) reports, given its significant volume of emissions; and
4. Issue a stronger rule governing commercial sterilizers, as soon as possible, to help end the health risks that this facility poses to Laredo.

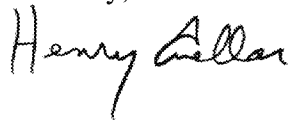
The EPA's 2014 National Air Toxic Assessment (NATA) found census tracts in Laredo that have an elevated cancer risk due to ethylene oxide emissions. However, the EPA has failed to

engage with residents living near Midwest Sterilization Corp. about ethylene oxide risks despite it being listed as one of 25 “high priority” ethylene oxide-emitting facilities by the EPA’s Office of Inspector General.

I believe that it is critical for the EPA to engage with members of the Laredo community on this issue and to provide solutions that help to reduce our exposure to ethylene oxide. I believe a necessary step in the right direction includes increased EPA oversight that includes fenceline monitoring of ethylene oxide facilities in the area.

I look forward to your response and respectfully request a dialogue to discuss next steps on this critical issue. Please contact my staffer, Kevin McGuire, at kevin.mcguire@mail.house.gov or 202-812-0447. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry Cuellar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Henry" and last name "Cuellar" clearly distinguishable.

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress
28th District of Texas

CC: Matthew Tejada, Director, Office of Environmental Justice
Joe Goffman, Acting Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation
Mayor Pete Saenz, Laredo, TX
Vanessa Perez, City Council Member District VII, Laredo, TX
Robert Eads, City Manager, Laredo, TX